

**MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.**  
**and the “COMMUNIST TRAINING SCHOOL” CONTROVERSY** rev. March 2019

For many decades, “state’s rights” and pro-segregation groups declared that Martin Luther King Jr. once “*attended a Communist training school*” --- which was a reference to King’s attendance at a 1957 Labor Day weekend seminar at Highlander Folk School in Monteagle TN.

But few people have explained how the description “*Communist training school*” came about, i.e. whom was its originator?

The John Birch Society and its front-group, Truth About Civil Turmoil (aka TACT), plastered our country with billboards and postcards showing a photo of King “*attending a Communist training school*”.

The billboards/flyers/postcards circulated by the Birch Society used the following photo published in the racist *Augusta Courier* newspaper and disseminated widely by numerous other extreme right and racist organizations:

[http://www.mdah.ms.gov/arrec/digital\\_archives/sovcom/result.php?image=images/png/cd06/041971.png&otherstuff=3|85|0|2|1|1|1|1|41350|](http://www.mdah.ms.gov/arrec/digital_archives/sovcom/result.php?image=images/png/cd06/041971.png&otherstuff=3|85|0|2|1|1|1|1|41350|)

Governors (like Ross Barnett of MS) repeated the charges against Highlander in testimony before Congress. See his comments in the following 7/13/63 *Jackson MS Clarion Ledger* article quoting a UPI report (link below---see bottom of 3<sup>rd</sup> column and all of 4<sup>th</sup> column):

[http://www.mdah.ms.gov/arrec/digital\\_archives/sovcom/result.php?image=images/png/cd09/067693.png&otherstuff=12|37|0|7|2|1|1|1|66823|](http://www.mdah.ms.gov/arrec/digital_archives/sovcom/result.php?image=images/png/cd09/067693.png&otherstuff=12|37|0|7|2|1|1|1|66823|)

John Birch Society authors like Gary Allen repeated the accusation in his 1971 “best-seller” book, “*It’s Very Simple: The True Story of Civil Rights*”. Many Congressmen inserted remarks into the *Congressional Record* which described Highlander in that same fashion.

Speakers under the auspices of the Birch Society’s American Opinion Speaker’s Bureau criss-crossed the country and “revealed” the “subversive” background of Highlander. Legislative hearings in Louisiana resulted in a report entitled “*Subversion in Racial Unrest*” which featured many witnesses who parroted the charges against Highlander.

The former President of the John Birch Society (John F. McManus) posted an article on the JBS website which made a preposterous claim in what McManus intended to be a rebuttal to an article published in the *Boston Globe*. See McManus article here:

<https://www.thenewamerican.com/reviews/opinion/item/26903-the-boston-globe-attacks-the-john-birch-society-with-falsities>

In his rebuttal, McManus declared that the Birch Society never labeled MLK Jr. as a Communist:

**"The Society never, I repeat never, labeled Martin Luther King a Communist. Its publications did show that he hired communists, accepted funding from communists, attended communist training sessions, and frequently started demonstrations that turned into communist-led rioting and destructiveness. It was these associations that led former Attorney General Robert Kennedy to wiretap King’s phone and take other steps to thwart what King was doing. When J. Edgar Hoover labeled King the ‘most notorious liar’ in America, he had plenty of reason to do so."**

This is a typical JBS debate tactic. They use every conceivable linguistic trick to associate and link a person with communists and communism but then claim they never called someone a Communist. Interestingly, when critics of the JBS refer to associations and links which JBS members

and officials have with racists, anti-semites or other noxious individuals, the JBS violently objects to that. However, the JBS never is concerned about its own comparable behavior.

With respect to MLK Jr. -- notice that McManus uses a plural when he declares that King "***attended communist training sessions***". However, this is exclusively a reference to one Labor Day speech by King at Highlander Folk School on September 2, 1957. You may read that speech here:

[http://kingencyclopedia.stanford.edu/encyclopedia/documentsentry/a\\_look\\_to\\_the\\_future\\_hfs.1.html#\\_ftn4](http://kingencyclopedia.stanford.edu/encyclopedia/documentsentry/a_look_to_the_future_hfs.1.html#_ftn4)

## So how did all this get started?

### Enter the Georgia Commission on Education.

The Georgia Commission on Education (GCE) was established in 1953 in order to preserve segregated public schools in Georgia. From its inception, the Commission was populated by life-long racists who were convinced that any integration proposal was evidence of a "***Communist plot***".

In the fall of 1954, the GCE's Executive Director (Atlanta attorney Durwood T. Pye) lobbied for a state Constitutional amendment which would privatize Georgia's schools in order to keep them segregated. The Constitutional amendment passed in November 1954.

Then, the newly elected segregationist Governor (Marvin Griffin) asked the GCE staff to produce regular reports to the legislature on the status of anti-integration efforts in the State.

### Who were the members of the Georgia Education Commission?

The most prominent Commission members were Governor Marvin Griffin (Chairman), Lt. Gov. Ernest Vandiver (Vice-Chairman), Georgia Attorney General Eugene Cook, and Roy V. Harris.

### What follows is a brief introduction to each individual.

**Governor Marvin Griffin** was a life-long segregationist and co-founder, in 1955, of the State's Rights Council of Georgia. The Council, like the GCE, was devoted to preventing integration in Georgia. Toward that end, Governor Griffin was warmly welcomed as a featured speaker at White Citizens Councils and State's Rights Council of Georgia events.

Incidentally, the President of the State's Rights Council of Georgia (R. Carter Pittman) told the *Atlanta Constitution* on 10/22/55 that: "***...the South has no racial problem and has had none for a half century. Its racial problems were solved by segregation.***" [Note: Pittman later became a John Birch Society endorser.]

Marvin Griffin served as Governor of Georgia from 1955-1959 and he previously served as Lt. Governor as well as serving in the Georgia State Legislature. He also was publisher and editor of the weekly *Bainbridge GA Post-Searchlight* newspaper, which served as another vehicle to express his pro-segregation sentiments.

In May 1956, Griffin made the following observations in a speech before the Southern Regional Citizens' Council in New Orleans:

**"Let me say to you tonight as we counsel together, do not be concerned by what is said by the Communists, the pinkos, the radicals, the NAACP, the ADA, the one-worlders and all that motley group of crackpots who are clamoring for desegregation and mongrelization. These groups of organized minorities are chanting a chorus that opposition to the fraudulent order of the Supreme Court is defiance of law. Of course, that is not true. The decision of May 17, 1954 is not law. It is an attempt to make law where none existed before by a non law-making body."** ...

**"You may take the map of the world today and look at all of the countries. Wherever you find a country that is populated by a black race, a colored race, or a mongrel race, the**

Christian religion has not been able to survive...I say without fear of contradiction, that the white race is the only race of people in history who have been able to perpetuate the Christian religion. Mongrelization of our people here in America will follow integration of the races in school and on the social level. When mongrelization of the races occurs--and God grant that it never will occur---it will bring with it the destruction of the Christian religion." ...

"There are obvious and well-known differences between whites and blacks which no amount of glossing-over and covering up by subversive so-called anthropologists and pseudo-scientists can hide...There are many reasons why the white people object to their children having this close association with nigger children. Among them are: health; the Nigra's high crime rate and disrespect for law; the lower mentality level; and the high rate of illegitimacy among Nigras." ...

"I would like to, for just a moment, if you please, tell you very briefly what we are attempting to do in our State of Georgia. First, in Georgia, the Constitution and the laws of our state prevent the expenditure of state tax funds for the operation of mixed schools. Also, our General Assembly will never appropriate one dime for mixed schools. And let me say to you definitely and unequivocally, Georgia will have separate public schools or no public schools." [Transcript of May 1956 Griffin speech before Southern Regional Citizens Council in New Orleans, pages 3-4; Also see: Highlander Folk School papers microfilm, Roll 4, Slide 85 - State Historical Society of Wisconsin.]

In 1957, Governor Griffin asked the Georgia Legislature to give the GCE authority to hire "*investigators*" and then to hold hearings and subpoena witnesses and the Legislature promptly did so. One of the first GCE publications was "*Ten Directors of the NAACP*" which sought to establish the "*Communist affiliations*" of prominent NAACP leaders.

By the end of 1957, the GCE had mailed over 500,000 copies of its pamphlets attacking the civil rights movement (and the NAACP) as "*subversive*".

Its most famous publication, however, was its "*expose*" of Highlander Folk School (HFS) as a vehicle of a "*Communist conspiracy*"

When the GCE learned that Highlander was planning a 25th anniversary celebration on Labor Day weekend of 1957, it assigned "*undercover investigator*" Edwin Hugo Friend to register at HFS and observe the event and take photos.

### What did Edwin Friend think his assignment was?

Friend's answer to that question may be found in a deposition he submitted in November 1959 for Tennessee court proceedings. Friend said that his assignment as a Georgia "*undercover agent*" was "*to go to Monteagle, Tennessee to the Highlander Folk School and find out whether that malignancy of the NAACP and Communism was leaking out over Georgia.*" [John Edgerton, "*The Trial of the Highlander Folk School*", *Southern Exposure*, Spring 1978, p 86.]

Using the "*findings*" of "*investigator*" Friend, the GCE published a pamphlet with the title, "*Highlander Folk School: Communist Training School - Monteagle Tenn.*"

You may see a copy here:

[http://www.mdah.ms.gov/arrec/digital\\_archives/sovcom/result.php?image=images/png/cd06/041961.png&otherstuff=3185101111111413401](http://www.mdah.ms.gov/arrec/digital_archives/sovcom/result.php?image=images/png/cd06/041961.png&otherstuff=3185101111111413401)

What was particularly compelling about the GCE pamphlet about Highlander were the photographs provided by “investigator” Edwin Friend which showed interracial activities such as square dancing, swimming, and blacks and whites eating together.

Friend also took the famous photograph of “*Martin Luther King attending a Communist Training School*”. The GCE circulated over 250,000 copies of its Highlander “expose” and Governor Marvin Griffin authorized reprints with or without credit being given to GCE.

### So who was Edwin H. Friend?

Aside from being described as a “*GCE investigator*”, Ed Friend was also described as the “*official state photographer for Georgia*”.

But Ed had an even more compelling title - **he was the official photographer for the Georgia Ku Klux Klan!**

Atlanta FBI file 80-1138, serial #3 is a 9/30/67 SAC Atlanta memo to J. Edgar Hoover which contains the following data:

Pg 1: “Friend was not interviewed in view of his reported close association with Calvin F. Craig, Grand Dragon United Klans of America, Realm of GA, and with Robert Shelton, Imperial Wizard UKA. The files of the Atlanta office reflect that in 1941 Friend was interviewed for position of photographer with the Bureau. He was not offered this position as he was unwilling to travel to Washington for acceptance of such a position. In May of 1962, (name deleted) reported that on 5/7/62 Calvin Craig, Robert Shelton, and (name deleted) all of whom are Klansmen, Shelton the Imperial Wizard, and Craig the UKA Grand Dragon, Realm of GA, proceeded to the Georgia State Capitol where they contacted a photographer named Ed Friend.”

Pg 2: “Friend then took Craig, Shelton, and (name deleted) into Attorney General Eugene Cook’s office at the State Capitol. The conversation that ensued related to the coming elections, the County Unit system, and school segregation.”

“In October 1957, Ed Friend was described as an undercover agent for the Georgia Bureau of Investigation and in this capacity had covered an assignment at Monteagle TN Labor Day 1957. Friend...subsequently testified before the Georgia Education Commission 10/4/57 regarding inter-racial meetings held at the Highlander Folk School, Monteagle TN and also the attendance of certain CP functionaries at this conference.”

“In March of 1960 (name deleted) reported that Ed Friend was in touch with Calvin F. Craig and asked to borrow a Klan robe from him so that the daughter of the Attorney General, Eugene Cook, who was then in attendance at a school in Connecticut, could use the Klan robe in conjunction with some school activity.”

(Name deleted) reported in April 1960, that according to Calvin Craig, Ed Friend would appear in a park in front of his laundry about noon to take some pictures of Negro children going to a Catholic school near the park and who were playing with white children. In April of 1960 (name deleted) reported further that Friend had made the pictures requested by Craig of the inter-racial children playing together. Craig reported that these photos taken by Friend were in the possession of the Governor of the State of Georgia; and the Governor, while he wanted this inter-racial activity reported, did not release the pictures to the Klan, as he did not want the photographer “State” identified as the individual having taken these pictures.”

Pg 3: “In September 1960, the Klan proposed a rally at Stone Mountain GA for 9/24/60 and during the planning stages Calvin F. Craig indicated he would have Ed Friend take pictures at this function. In view of the above cited close association on the part of Friend with the Ku Klux Klan, Calvin F. Craig, and

Robert Shelton, leaders in the Klan, it is considered inadvisable to interview Ed Friend, as if the opportunity presents itself, he will capitalize on any contacts had with the FBI.”

When the GCE published its pamphlet on Highlander, accompanied by a picture of a group of individuals seated in an auditorium (one of whom was Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.) it described the HFS seminar as being "held to discuss methods and tactics for precipitating racial strife and disturbances." [HQ 61-7511, #206 is a copy of GCE publication, *Highlander Folk School: Communist Training School—Monteagle TN*].

[https://archive.org/stream/foia\\_Highlander\\_Folk\\_School-HQ-5/Highlander\\_Folk\\_School-HQ-5#page/n61/mode/2up](https://archive.org/stream/foia_Highlander_Folk_School-HQ-5/Highlander_Folk_School-HQ-5#page/n61/mode/2up)

Subsequently, Edwin Friend testified before a Tennessee legislative hearing concerning what he "learned" during his "investigation" of Highlander. The excerpt appearing below, reveals his underlying motivation and the basis for him describing Highlander as a "Communist Training School".

"Q: Mr. Friend, was that a subversive meeting there at that time?

A: It was subversive, sir, to the way that I have been taught to live in America.

Q: Explain that to the committee.

A: I have been taught by southern tradition to keep the races separate. I was taught to go to Sunday school and Church. I was taught to respect the other fellow's habitat, and that is what I have always tried to do. Up here it seems like all of those things weren't even considered. It is the primary motive of this group to tear down the forces that were trying to keep the races separate in the South." [Joint Legislative Investigating Committee, State of Tennessee: *Investigation of Highlander Folk School, Grundy County Tennessee*, 3/4/59, p447.]

Friend was asked another question which produced a revealing answer:

"Q. Do you believe that anyone that espouses the things that you have just said to promote integration for that kind of motive, could possibly be a good Tennessean, a good Southerner, or a good American?"

A. I can guarantee you he is not what I would call a good American, Sir." [Ibid, p451]

Friend also testified about one of his photos which revealed another matter at Highlander that greatly disturbed him: **square dancing!**

"This is a square dance held at night in one of the buildings on this estate of Mr. Horton...The approach to this square dance seemed to be very harmless, in that you get a person in the square dance and the caller can call it in such a way that the Negro boy will wind up dancing with the white girl...This was called and invariably he always wound up with one of the Negro boys dancing with one of the white girls in order to get them familiar, and these doctrines were taught [sic] in this school, and in order to break down the resistance to integration in that you had to do it anyway that a person really wouldn't be conscious of it..." [Ibid, page 443.]

The attack upon Highlander Folk School was part of a larger effort to discredit and demonize anyone connected to the civil rights movement in the United States -- and in particular to our most prominent national civil rights organizations.

For example:

**Julian Eugene Cook aka Eugene Cook** served as Attorney General of Georgia from 1945-1965.

On October 19, 1955 Cook gave a speech entitled "*The Ugly Truth About The NAACP*" before the Peace Officers Association of Georgia.

Cook discussed what he described as "the subversive designs behind the current crusade of the misnamed National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and its fellow-traveling fronts to force upon the South the Communist-inspired doctrine of racial integration and amalgamation."

Additional pertinent excerpts from the Cook speech are as follows:

Page 2: Cook described the NAACP as “sinister” and he observed that: “These facts have been uncovered, checked, assembled, and correlated through many weeks of intensive investigation and cooperative effort by my staff and the staffs of Congressman James C. Davis of Georgia and Senator James O. Eastland of Mississippi.” [See pertinent details regarding the background of Sen. Eastland below. Davis had been a KKK member in the 1920’s.]

Page 3: “South-hating white people with long records of affinity for, affiliation with, and participation in Communist, Communist-front, fellow-traveling and subversive organizations, activities, and causes, have directed and subsidized the NAACP.”

Excerpts from Cook’s speech were reprinted as an editorial in the 10/30/56 issue of the *Georgia State College Signal* student newspaper. Cook’s entire speech may be seen here:

[https://digitalcollections.usm.edu/uncategorized/digitalFile\\_2a612e2f-23e9-4f93-916d-36c8993caee/](https://digitalcollections.usm.edu/uncategorized/digitalFile_2a612e2f-23e9-4f93-916d-36c8993caee/)

Among the most outrageous assertions made by Cook was his characterization of NAACP Executive Secretary Roy Wilkins as subversive. [See discussion below regarding Wilkins and the NAACP.]

Eugene Cook’s speech was reprinted and widely distributed by White Citizens Councils and other white supremacy groups throughout the country.

### **Background on Senator James O. Eastland of Mississippi**

Sen. James O. Eastland was described by senior FBI officials in a memo as “a strong advocate of white supremacy”. [HQ file 94-4-5130, serial #12; 9/3/54 memo from M.A. Jones to Assistant Director Louis B. Nichols].

Another FBI memo dated 11/4/66 from the Special Agent in Charge of the FBI’s Jackson MS field office to Director J. Edgar Hoover summarized information from Klan informants who were said to have provided the Bureau with “accurate” information in the past.

The informants stated that during Eastland’s re-election campaign in 1966, he met with representatives of the White Knights of the KKK of Mississippi. A subsequent memo to FBI Assistant Director Cartha DeLoach stated that “It appears most likely that local campaign workers on behalf of Senator Eastland were attempting to obtain the Klan vote on his behalf...” because of Eastland’s efforts with respect to KKK members charged with murdering civil rights workers in Mississippi.

Yet another memo reports that, according to “Klan sources” of the FBI’s Jackson MS field office, “Senator Eastland had met with the heads of two Klan units in Mississippi (Samuel Holloway Bowers, Imperial Wizard of the White Knights of the Ku Klux Klan of Mississippi and Robert M. Shelton, Imperial Wizard of United Klans of America, Inc.) and that some sort of ‘deal’ was made.” [HQ file 94-4-5130, serial #52 = 11/17/66 SAC Jackson to J. Edgar Hoover].

Jackson FBI file 67-30, serial # illegible, page 1 is an 11/17/66 memo from the SAC Jackson to J. Edgar Hoover which reports on an informant report regarding a conversation which the informant had with Imperial Wizard Robert Shelton.

Shelton said he and another person met Eastland on 10/31/66 at a motel “at which time Shelton requested that Eastland help Shelton with his conviction for contempt of Congress in return for Shelton throwing the support of the UKA behind Senator Eastland in his race to be re-elected Senator. According to Shelton, Senator Eastland was noncommittal on supporting Shelton during their face-to-face meeting, however, later that night telephonically contacted Shelton and promised his assistance to Shelton in his case for contempt of Congress in return for Shelton’s support in his race to be re-elected Senator.”



Page 2 of this memo refers to a letter written by Neshoba County (MS) Sheriff Lawrence Rainey addressed "*To Whom It May Concern*" wherein he stated: "I know for a fact that James O. Eastland helped prevent the trial of 16 other men and myself in Philadelphia MS."

Page 3 of this memo reports that another Klan informant told the FBI on 10/20/66 that in Klan circles in the Meridian MS area, there was awareness that Eastland "has been taking credit for the Federal Government dropping charges against those indicted in the Neshoba County slayings."

In addition, "a prominent local Klansman" in Lauderdale County MS reported that Eastland "appeared at a rally held in Forest MS and that Eastland had invited Sam Bowers, Imperial Wizard of the White Knights of the Ku Klux Klan of Mississippi and (name deleted) Neshoba County Attorney, and himself to occupy the speaker's stand at the rally held in Forest MS. During the rally...Eastland stated that he would help the 17 defendants in the Neshoba County case and that he has been 'pulling strings for them'."

Rev. Delmar Dennis, a segregationist (and John Birch Society member), infiltrated the White Knights of the Ku Klux Klan of Mississippi (WKKKKOM) for the FBI. He became the Grand Titan and worked closely with Imperial Wizard Samuel Bowers.

Information provided by Rev. Dennis to his FBI contact at the Jackson MS field office was summarized in a 12/12/66 memo. The references below to "*confidential source*" refer to Rev. Dennis:

"On 10/20/66, the confidential source advised that Klan circles in the Meridian MS area were abuzz with the knowledge that Senator James O Eastland has been taking credit for the Federal Government dropping charges against those indicted in the Neshoba County slayings. Eastland, according to the source, had made his efforts in behalf of those indicted known to (name deleted) Neshoba County Attorney, and other attorneys for the defendants in the Neshoba County case. Source also related that (name deleted) prominent Klan member in the Meridian area, advised that all of the defendants are working earnestly in behalf of Senator Eastland's campaign for re-election and (name deleted) felt that if Eastland is re-elected he will keep the MIBURN defendants out of jail."

"On 10/20/66, confidential source also advised (name deleted) that Senator James O. Eastland recently appeared at a political rally held in Forest MS and that Eastland had invited Sam Bowers, Imperial Wizard of the WKKKKOM, to occupy the speaker's stand with him. Source also related that Eastland stated that he has been 'pulling strings for them' and that Eastland 'has enough seniority to help them'." [Jackson file 197-17905-5, no serial number shown, 12/12/66 SAC Jackson to J. Edgar Hoover]

**Roy V. Harris**, was a lawyer, a former State legislator in both the Georgia House and Senate, and a co-founder and the first Vice President of the State's Rights Council of Georgia. He also was a member and officer of the Georgia chapter of the anti-integration Citizens Councils of America. In 1966 he became President of the national Association of Citizens' Councils of America.

Harris published *The Augusta (GA) Courier*, a white supremacist weekly paper which often devoted its columns to articles about African Americans being genetically and mentally inferior to caucasians. Harris reportedly headed the Ku Klux Klan in the Valdosta GA area circa 1959. Harris reprinted the GCE photo of King "attending a Communist Training School" in the 7/8/63 issue of his *Courier* newspaper.

**Samuel Ernest Vandiver Jr.** succeeded Marvin Griffin as Governor of Georgia from 1959-1963. He had been Lt. Governor during Griffin's administration.

In 1958, Vandiver's campaign platform included this statement: "When I am your Governor, neither my three children, nor any child of yours, will ever attend a racially mixed school in the State of Georgia. No, not one." However, he was not able to keep that promise.

### FBI Files on Highlander Folk School

In 1957, the FBI responded to an inquiry about Highlander from Tennessee State Senator R.L. Peters Jr. The notation on the Bureau file copy states:

"The Bureau has known of the Highlander Folk School for years and has investigated numerous allegations concerning its activities. While it permits Communists to attend, there has been no indication that it teaches courses along the Communist line or has ever employed any Communists on its staff. It is primarily designed to teach economics and related subjects." [HQ 61-7511, #212, 11/12/57].

A July 1963 FBI memo summarizes the FBI file on Highlander Folk School:

"Due to the interracial character of the School, it has been the subject of numerous allegations that it represented the headquarters of communism in east Tennessee. An extensive investigation was conducted in 1941 and 1942 as a result of the allegations. These allegations have never been substantiated and much of the information of a subversive derogatory nature concerning this School was later repudiated by the individuals who previously furnished the information...This organization has continuously been involved in the integration movement and as a result charges are being continuously made that it is 'communist'. These charges are based mainly on the opinion of the individuals making the charges that being pro-integration is being pro-communist." [HQ 64-7511, #286, July 26, 1963, F.J. Baumgardner to W.C. Sullivan].

In 1963, when Mississippi Governor Ross Barnett testified before the U.S. Senate Commerce Committee against a proposed public accommodations bill, he raised the issue of Dr. King's attendance at HFS. An FBI memo on the controversy concludes:

"FBI files concerning the HFS show that this school was the subject of a security investigation which was closed in 1943...No information was developed that the school offered courses of instruction on communism nor that the Communist Party ever succeeded in gaining control of the school. Due to its interracial character, however, the HFS has been the subject of numerous past allegations that it represents the headquarters for communism in eastern Tennessee." [July 13, 1963 FBI memo from J.F. Bland to W.C. Sullivan].

In May 1961, Martin Luther King's attendance at Highlander's 1957 event was discussed in an internal FBI memo which produced blistering comments (and censure letters) by J. Edgar Hoover to members of the Bureau's Name Check Section -- the unit which prepared summary memoranda for high government officials.

On May 22, 1961, FBI summaries were sent to the Attorney General on five individuals -- one of whom was MLK Jr. The summary memo on King stated that King had "attended a Communist Party training school seminar". J. Edgar Hoover asked for an explanation of why the summary memo had stated that King had not been the subject of a security investigation if, as the summary memo stated, he attended a Communist Party school. The subsequent explanation produced the following explanation by the Supervisor of the Name Check Unit, George H. Scatterday:

"Reverend King has established himself as of one the most vocal and nationally prominent leaders on behalf of integration for the Negroes. In his efforts along these lines he has accepted financial contributions from all types of organizations, including groups cited as subversive; lent support to left-wing causes; and has associated with representatives of cited organizations and Communist Party members. This activity, however, has apparently been in the furtherance of his integrationist aims. There is no evidence that he has ever been



affiliated with the Communist Party...The synopsis of referenced memorandum contained the statement concerning MLK Jr., that in 1957 he attended a Communist Party training school seminar and reportedly gave a closing speech. The Director [Hoover] has asked '*Let me have more details.*' "

"The foregoing brief statement did not convey the full facts concerning the nature of the meeting attended by King. In our efforts to be brief we did not put in sufficient detail. We should have indicated that the term '*Communist Party training school*' was a descriptive term which had been utilized by the Georgia Commission on Education to describe the Highlander Folk School, Monteagle, Tennessee, where the seminar was held and was not a characterization of the specific meeting attended by King...A review of the Bureau file concerning the Highlander Folk School reveals that a security investigation on the school was closed in 1943...No information has been received that the school has offered courses of instruction in communism, nor has information been received that the Communist Party ever succeeded in gaining control of the school. Due to its interracial character, however, it has been the subject of numerous past allegations that it represents the headquarters for communism in Eastern Tennessee." [HQ 67-318195, #210, 5/23/61 memo from G.H. Scatterday to A. Rosen -- copy in Scatterday's personnel file.]

J. Edgar Hoover handwrote two comments on this memo:

(1) With respect to the original memo's characterization that King "*attended a Communist Party school seminar*", Hoover observed: "**This is the understatement of the year. You deliberately made an erroneous statement of fact.**"

(2) With respect to the description of Highlander originating with the Georgia Commission on Education, Hoover observed: "**This is astounding. Upon what the first memo said, I orally advised A.G. [Attorney General] that King had been associated with Communists and had been at a Communist meeting.**"

Hoover then approved a recommendation on the memo that Section Chief Scatterday should receive a letter of censure because his summary memoranda and synopsis regarding King "*did not accurately set forth*" the correct details regarding his attendance at the Highlander event.

At this point, Hoover did not know that the description of Highlander which was published by the Georgia Commission on Education in its pamphlet actually originated with Edwin H. Friend, the official photographer of the Georgia KKK!

### **House Committee on Un-American Activities on Highlander Folk School**

The first paragraph of a 4/5/65 HCUA memo on Highlander Folk School states:

"Although some references to the Highlander Folk School appear in the public material of this committee, the organization has not been officially cited by the committee or any other Federal authority."

### **FBI Files on NAACP and NAACP leaders**

#### **Julia Brown on NAACP and Walter White**

Julia Brown joined the Communist Party but subsequently realized her mistake and she went to the FBI to report her activities. The Bureau asked her to remain in the Party and provide them with information---which she did.

After surfacing as an FBI informant, Julia became a paid speaker for the John Birch Society. In a March 1961 magazine interview, Julia Brown stated that Communists had "***little or no influence***" within the NAACP and she concluded that:

**"I'm 100 percent with the NAACP and I think they are doing a wonderful job and so does the FBI. Top government officials are aware that the NAACP is legal and is working in the American way for first class citizenship for all Americans."** [*Ebony* magazine, "I Was a Spy For the FBI", March 1961, p102]

In her March 1961 *Ebony* magazine article Julia stated that when she infiltrated the Cleveland NAACP chapter in June 1956, local NAACP officials **"recognized her as a Communist and spread the word around. 'They didn't say anything to me but you could feel the air getting cold. They didn't allow me to move in any direction. Oh, they are smart guys down in Cleveland, those NAACP guys.'"**

Confirming her *Ebony* article recollections, FBI HQ file 100-382107, #61, is a 09/09/60 memo from SAC [Special Agent in Charge] Cleveland to J. Edgar Hoover which states on page 2 that in June 1956 **Julia "...was assigned by the CP to infiltrate the NAACP in Cleveland which she succeeded in doing in the beginning. Later the Cleveland NAACP, which takes an anti-Communist position, removed her from a position of leadership which she had attained in the NAACP, since she had become known as a Communist."**

During her House Committee on Un-American Activities (HCUA) testimony in June 1962, there was a lengthy Q&A regarding her infiltration of the NAACP. Page numbers which appear below refer to the HCUA testimony page.

Pg 1027: Julia reported a visit by Senora Lawson to her Cleveland home. Lawson, a Communist, reported to Julia about her infiltration of the local chapter of the NAACP and her attendance at an NAACP Ohio State convention:

Julia stated: **"During the convention, she would bring me literature, and when the resolution of the NAACP was out, in their resolution they denounced the Communist Party and said that they didn't want members of the CP as members of the NAACP and Senora Lawson brought me the resolution, and had quite a bit to say about it. And later she had a meeting, she told me, I didn't go to the meeting – with some of the comrades who were up in the air over this resolution that the NAACP had made."**

Pg 1028: HCUA Counsel Alfred M. Nittle then asked Julia: **"The NAACP adopted a resolution at the Cleveland convention condemning Communism, or to that effect, and declaring that they did not want Communists as members of the NAACP?"**

Julia Brown: **"That is correct."**

Brown then discussed the reaction of James Jackson (who was editor of the Communist newspaper, *The Worker*, and a CP National Committee member) and Anthony Krchmarak, (Chairman of the Ohio District of the CP) to the NAACP resolution. She said: **"They didn't like it."**

Alfred Nittle then asked Julia to explain why she became an NAACP member.

Brown replied: **"I had also been asked, or told, rather, to infiltrate the NAACP and I had been successful in joining the Women's Auxiliary there."** Her instructions came from CP member Hugh Statten a Chicago CP organizer.

Nittle then asked Julia to specify Statten's instructions re: NAACP.

Pg 1029: Brown: **"Well, Hugh came to my home and asked me to join the NAACP to infiltrate the NAACP; that they had not been successful in any of the women going in, that they had one person, and they did not think she was doing a very good job. And that person was Frida Kritner...He asked me to go in and report on the activities and policies of the NAACP, and report to the CP."**

Pg 1041: Julia discussed the murder of Harry Tyson Moore, an NAACP official in Mims FL. She was asked to describe the Communist Party's purpose in going to Florida and attempting to meet with the Governor -- and she replied:

**"To discredit the NAACP...The CP, as a rule, whenever anything happened to the Negro, they always have tried to take a front seat in everything; and in order to discredit the NAACP and to barge in on the NAACP's activities."**

In another magazine interview, Julia said:

**"I don't think the Communists have appeal to Negroes. I feel that American Negroes are awakened to the menace of Communism."** [Sepia magazine, "*Communist For The FBI*", September 1962, p12]

Also see Julia's discussion about the NAACP, and in particular, her characterization of Walter White in her 1966 book, *I Testify*:

**"Many times I have been asked if the NAACP was a Communist front organization. I have been able to say, truthfully, that, so far as I could discern, it was not. Indeed the great Walter White, executive secretary of the NAACP prior to his death, fought Communism with might and main. Older NAACP leaders have been equally fierce in their opposition to the Red conspiracy. But it has only been by dint of great effort on the part of these loyal men and women that the Party has been thwarted in its attempts to completely dominate the NAACP."** ... [Julia Brown, "*I Testify: My Years As An FBI Undercover Agent*", Western Islands, 1966, pages 124-125.]

Julia also mentions that the wife of one prominent CPUSA official **"hated the NAACP as did all other Communists."** (Ibid, page 125]

And referring to the Communist Party attempt to exploit the murder of 14 year old Emmett Till to its advantage, Julia observed:

**"Greater success might have attended these efforts had the Party not been opposed by the NAACP...The CPUSA criticized the NAACP bitterly for not conducting a more militant campaign of protests and demonstrations. The NAACP adamantly refused to let itself be used, and counseled its members to avoid any action which would reflect adversely on Negroes."** (Ibid, page 165]

### **Lola Belle Holmes on NAACP:**

Lola Belle Holmes also joined the CPUSA at the request of the FBI. From August 1957 to January 24, 1963, Lola worked inside the Communist Party in Chicago and she provided information about Communist Party matters to the FBI. She also subsequently became a paid speaker for the Birch Society.

Lola's NAACP comments parallel those made by Julia Brown (discussed above). Prior to appearing on the Birch Society's lecture circuit as a paid speaker Lola (like Julia Brown) characterized CPUSA attempts to infiltrate NAACP as unsuccessful due to the anti-Communist leadership of the NAACP.

Lola discussed CPUSA attempts to infiltrate NAACP and the Negro American Labor Council during her testimony before the House Committee on Un-American Activities:

**"I was on the NAACP caucus of the Communist Party from 1957 until 1959. I was nominated as secretary for the NAACP against the incumbent, and at that time we lost the election...Subsequently, the national office declared the election valid and the Party slate was thrown out. After the Party slate was thrown out, the Party caucus had a meeting in 1960 and decided to pull its forces out of the NAACP because they realized they could not work in the**

**NAACP effectively."** [*Communist Activities in The Chicago Illinois Area, part 1*; Hearings before the House Committee on Un-American Activities; May 25-27 and June 22, 1965, page 372.]

HUAC Chairman Edwin Willis then asked Lola:

**"Do I take it that these caucuses in the NAACP were not with the knowledge or approval of the leadership of the NAACP?"**

Lola replied:

**"It definitely was not with the knowledge...I want it to be very clear the leadership of either organization did not know that the CP had caucuses working in their respective organizations. When they found it out, they found out who they were, they immediately dropped them from the membership list."** [Ibid]

### **George Schuyler on NAACP**

George Schuyler is a former socialist and former NAACP Business Manager, who in the 1960's became a John Birch Society speaker and writer. His evaluation of the NAACP and its leadership refutes standard dogma promoted by Eugene Cook, the White Citizens Councils, the Birch Society and all their soulmates.

For example, in a 1947 column Schuyler wrote the following about the NAACP:

**"Unlike many other organizations that screamed for justice for Negroes, it had no ulterior motives, no axes to grind, foreign or domestic, only a deep desire to further the advancement of colored people, socially, politically, and economically."**

Then referring to the problems of racial discrimination still in existence after World War II came to a close Schuyler observed:

**"These evils have to be combated with skill and intelligence and the NAACP is the only sincere and capable organization prepared to do it. Unlike such organizations as the National Negro Congress, it is not connected with any foreign ideology or power, and it shies far away from the Communist Party line which is the way to group suicide...no one can deny that the NAACP is THE great champion and defender of our rights in this civilization and its long and remarkable record in this connection obligates every libertarian, regardless of color or creed, to give it his fullest support year in and year out."** [Schuyler column "Views and Reviews", **Pittsburgh (PA) Courier**, 2/15/47].

### **FBI and HUAC on NAACP**

In April 1947, J. Edgar Hoover replied to a letter from NAACP Executive Secretary Walter White:

**"Equality, freedom, and tolerance are essential in a democratic government. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People has done much to preserve these principles and to perpetuate the desires of our founding fathers."** [HQ file 61-3176, #378X thru #383, 4/14/47 thru 4/21/47, White to Hoover and Hoover reply to White; Also see HQ file 61-3176, #1076, where White's letter is discussed in 10/19/55 memo from FBI Assistant Director Louis Nichols to FBI Associate Director Clyde Tolson.]

In 1954, the House Committee on Un-American Activities published a report entitled **"The American Negro in the Communist Party"** which concluded that ...

**“The fact that the Communist conspiracy has experienced so little success in attracting the American Negro to its cause reflects favorably on the loyalty and integrity of the vast majority of the 15,000,000 Negro citizens.”**

The HCUA report goes on to state that the **“CPUSA has exploited issues of genuine concern to the American Negro and all Americans...”**

The HCUA summarized the testimony of two ex-Communist African Americans (Sheldon Tappes and Louis Rosser) both of whom detailed how the CPUSA fought the NAACP during World War II.

Rosser also mentioned how the Party worked to **“discredit”** and **“muzzle”** A. Philip Randolph by publishing a hostile article about him when he received a NAACP medal for his work seeking integration of blacks into industry. Randolph was described by the Communist press as a **“traitor to his country”**. [HCUA, *The American Negro in The Communist Party*, pages 7-9]

In 1962 FBI Assistant Director William C. Sullivan gave a speech in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. He subsequently was attacked because of favorable comments he made about the NAACP during a Q&A after his speech. The attack was launched by W.H. (Bill) Rutledge of Shreveport LA. Rutledge was Executive Director of Citizens Councils of Louisiana, Inc. Sullivan wrote a memo to summarize his encounter. The memo points out that Rutledge **“has connections with the Ku Klux Klan.”**

According to Sullivan:

**“In a question period at Baton Rouge, I was asked if the NAACP had been cited as a Communist front organization on the Attorney General’s List. I replied that it had not. I was then asked if any communists had ever infiltrated the NAACP. I replied that communists had infiltrated certain local chapters of the NAACP and explained that because of such infiltration in the Chicago chapter, it had been expelled from the parent organization. I further pointed out that the NAACP was a constant target of communist infiltration, while at the same time, responsible leaders of the NAACP on a national level were attempting to resist communist infiltration and that only the future knew the answer to the final outcome of this encounter. I was then asked if the NAACP was controlled on the national level by communists. I replied that it was not, but again emphasized that the fact remains all levels of the NAACP, as well as all other mass organizations in the United States, had been and will continue to be a target for communist propaganda and infiltration. When asked to disclose the identity of communists who had infiltrated the NAACP, I replied that this information was classified and could not be divulged.”** [HQ file 105-40774, #40 = 5/18/62 memo by W.C. Sullivan to A.H. Belmont pertaining to Citizens Council of Greater New Orleans.]

The Bureau prepared two comprehensive monographs on the history of *"The Communist Party and the Negro"*. In the October 1956 edition, the Bureau concluded:

**"Persons identified with the Communist Party and the NAACP have, in the past, acted jointly and frequently engaged in parallel activities. However, it must be kept in mind that the ultimate aims of these two groups are entirely distinct. The CP seeks to foster discord and discontent among the Negro race by agitation and propaganda...whereas the goal of the NAACP is to achieve full racial integration and equality within the present form of government. It is to be noted that the CPUSA, in order to confuse the American people, is attempting to make its policies parallel to those of the NAACP on controversial, racial issues....The NAACP held its 47th annual convention in San Francisco CA from June 26 to July 1, 1956. It re-affirmed its anti-communist position and at the same time extended its policy of non-cooperation with communist-controlled groups to declare communists ineligible for membership in the NAACP."**

The monograph then goes on to discuss attempts by Communists to infiltrate and use NAACP chapters around the country and how local NAACP leaders repulsed such attempts.

Similarly, J. Edgar Hoover discusses the anti-Communist policies of the NAACP in his book, *Masters of Deceit*:

**"The (Communist) Party has made vigorous efforts to infiltrate the NAACP. This organization in 1950 authorized its board of directors to revoke the charter of any chapter found to be**



**communist-controlled.**" ... Hoover then discussed several such infiltration attempts and how NAACP officials thwarted them. [J. Edgar Hoover, *Masters of Deceit*, Henry Holt, 1958, p229-230].

Numerous documents in FBI files reveal the unhappiness of senior CPUSA leaders with the NAACP and the failure of the Communist Party to have any significant impact upon both the NAACP and other civil rights organizations.

In July 1963, J. Edgar Hoover sent a memo to all field offices which advised them of the creation of a new HQ file (100-3-116) which was to be used to capture information regarding **"Communist Influence In Racial Matters"** as a consequence of the Party's renewed interest in exploiting opportunities presented by the civil rights movement.

Hoover's memo portrayed the CPUSA as outsiders seeking to exert influence within "legitimate" civil rights organizations (such as NAACP and Negro American Labor Council) and it quoted comments by CP leaders lamenting the lack of CP involvement within the civil rights movement. One pertinent excerpt of Hoover's memo follows:

**"In recent weeks functionaries of the CPUSA have made statements which indicate their concern over the lack of Party participation in the current Negro movement. Benjamin J. Davis Jr. remarked on 6/19/63 while attending a meeting of leading CPUSA functionaries, 'We are witnessing a revolutionary movement in our country, but we are just not in it...' Irving Potash, on this same date, remarked that 'we' are not coming forward. Not writing and not giving leadership. The leadership of the Party, according to Potash, should explore all ways and means for the purpose of playing a bigger role in the struggle."** [Chicago 100-46624, #1; 7/18/63 J. Edgar Hoover memo to all Special Agents in Charge of FBI field offices.]

A few days later, the Chicago field office sent its first report to headquarters on the status of CPUSA efforts at infiltrating civil rights groups. Chicago reported that one CP member had infiltrated NAACP's Illinois state headquarters, **"however he has not influenced the organization in any specific direction as far as Party policy is concerned."** [Chicago 100-46624, #2, 7/24/63 SAC Chicago memo to J. Edgar Hoover]

On February 13-14, 1960, there was a meeting of senior Communist Party officials in the Midwest. Twenty five Party officials representing Illinois, Michigan, Ohio, Missouri, and Wisconsin attended this closed meeting. Claude Lightfoot, Vice-Chairman of the Illinois CPUSA, chaired the meeting.

Each representative present gave a summary of their attempts to infiltrate the NAACP. The following comments are from an FBI informant who attended the meeting and he may have tape recorded it. The page numbers shown below refer to the FBI summary memo where the comments are made.

Pg 9: Cleveland rep: **"He referred to a period of the late 40's and said at that time the CP had five members on the Executive Board of the NAACP. Now the CP has no members on the Executive Board of the NAACP in Cleveland."** Rep also referred to the **"constant red-baiting of local NAACP leaders."**

Page 11: Chicago rep: **"The problem confronting the CP is how to work now in an organization in which it is very difficult to get on a committee and in which the committees do not function."**

Page 11-12: Detroit rep: **"He said it is hard to work in the NAACP in Detroit...He stated that the big problem as far as he is concerned is that the CP says that members should work in the NAACP, but how do you do it? Every time we make a move, we are stopped and stifled. As a result, we are demoralized...In regard to the role of the CP in the NAACP (name deleted) feels that it is correct to work in the NAACP, but it is necessary to do so from a position of strength. But the CP does not have strength at the present time."**



Page 13: St. Louis rep: **"He stated that the CP has no one consistently working in the NAACP in St. Louis."** [NYC file 100-80640, unrecorded; 2/17/60 SAC Chicago to J. Edgar Hoover re: 2/13-14/60 CP meeting].

As all these statements make clear, J. Edgar Hoover and the FBI saw Communists as **OUTSIDERS** seeking to infiltrate the civil rights movement and achieve influence and control whereas racists and segregationists and their apologists saw them as **INSIDERS** who created the movement and controlled it from its inception.

### **ROY WILKINS**

In April 1955 Roy Wilkins succeeded the recently deceased Walter White as Executive Secretary of the NAACP. J. Edgar Hoover asked his subordinates, **"What do we know about him?"**

The resulting summary memo was dated 4/13/55. The memo summarized Wilkins' earlier associations with left-wing organizations but concluded that Wilkins was **"strongly anti-communist and has done all possible to steer NAACP away from any Communist infiltration."**

The memo also summarized a 1949 report by an informant within the CPUSA which stated that the CPUSA was **"greatly concerned over participation of Roy Wilkins"** at a particular function because **"Wilkins openly opposed to tactics of Communist Party and had been one of leaders in NAACP responsible for defeat of the Communists in their effort to take over the organization on a national scale."**

The memo also mentions an article by **"Benjamin Davis and Henry Winston, Communist Party functionaries on national level, critical of Wilkins in January 1950 because he would not accept Communist help."** [HQ 62-78270, unrecorded, 4/13/55, M.A. Jones to Mr. Nichols.]

### **Additional FBI document comments about Wilkins and NAACP**

NYC 100-128355, serial #74 is a 10/11/63 New York City field office summary report on Wilkins.

Page 4 reports on an FBI informant who was at a meeting of the CPUSA in New Jersey where County Organizers reported that Wilkins, like the CIO, was purging the NAACP of Communists.

Page 5 reports on a 7/2/50 article in the Communist newspaper, *The Worker*, captioned **"NAACP Leaders Dumped Rights of Negroes"** which discusses the 41st Annual NAACP Convention. The article describes Wilkins as **"the main front man for the State Department's disastrous anti-Negro policies."**

Another informant within the CPUSA described Wilkins as someone who **"would not knowingly be used by the Communists; that Wilkins had fought Communism for many years and that he was then openly anti-Communist."**

Page 6: Another FBI informant reported on a letter sent by Wilkins to all NAACP branches with respect to a forthcoming *"Leadership Conference on Civil Rights"* meeting in Washington DC to be held March 4-6, 1956. The informant commented on the substance of the Wilkins letter:

**"He further warned local NAACP branches to be very careful in selecting individuals to the nationwide conference in Washington, inasmuch as left-wingers were making a special effort to be elected as delegates by local branches of the NAACP. Wilkins stated that the NAACP policy was not to cooperate with any Communist front or left-wing groups."**

Another source reported on a Wilkins speech at the May 17, 1957 *"March on Washington"*:

**“According to this source, Wilkins stated that the Communist Party was an evil force, that it attempted to use the NAACP as a front for CP activities and that the CP can only mean poverty, economic strain, and slavery.”**

NYC 100-128355, serial #100 is a 6/18/65 memo from a St. Louis FBI Special Agent (SA) to his Special Agent in Charge of the St. Louis office. On page 3 of the memo, the SA reports on a 5/17/65 visit to St. Louis by Claude Lightfoot. Lightfoot was a member of the CPUSA National Executive Committee. The memo points out that...

**“Lightfoot spoke critically of Roy Wilkins (NAACP) and James Farmer (CORE).”**

During the 1960's, Wilkins was one of the black leaders whom the FBI thought to be a responsible, moderate, anti-communist and one of two prominent African-Americans that the Bureau considered as the most desirable potential replacement for Martin Luther King Jr. as the leading advocate for African-Americans. The other person was Samuel Pierce.

In April 1968, FBI Assistant Director William Sullivan prepared a paper for publication in *Religion In Life*, a journal produced by the University of North Carolina Law School.

In a section captioned "Gains In Equality", Sullivan discusses "**precedent-establishing Negroes (who) through hard work and abundance of ability and talent have become nationally and internationally prominent.**"

Among the persons he cited as deserving of respect and praise and "outstanding recognition" were:

Thurgood Marshall, U.S. Supreme Court Justice (and formerly the NAACP's Chief Counsel)

Robert C. Weaver, Secretary of Housing and Urban Development

Ralph Bunche (who) "**has ably served this country at the United Nations**"

Carl Rowan "**who has served his country with distinction**" and

Roy Wilkins, A. Philip Randolph and Whitney Young (who) "**have used their great skill and resources to gain so much for their fellow Negroes through remedies available under the law.**"

[William C. Sullivan, *Communism and the American Negro*, Winter 1968, *Religion in Life*, page 600].

Significantly, all of the aforementioned individuals were routinely denounced as "**subversive**" or tainted by "**Communist**" affiliations by segregation apologists.

For example, for details concerning African-American labor leader and civil rights activist A. Philip Randolph, see chapter 6 of my Report on the John Birch Society: <http://ernie1241.googlepages.com/jbs-3>

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